

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
SOUTHERN ZONE BENCH, CHENNAI**

ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 13 of 2025

Tribunal on its own motion - **SUO MOTU**
based on the News item in
The New Indian Express newspaper,
Chennai e-edition dated 16.01.2025,
titled, "**Experts are alarmed as 350 turtles
was ashore dead till January 15**".

... Suo moto

Vs.

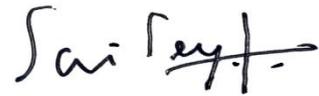
1. Union of India,
Represented by its Secretary,
MOEF & CC, New Delhi and ors.

... Respondents

Additional Typedset filed by 1st Respondent -MoEF &CC

SNo	Date	Description of Document	Pg No
1	07.12.2025	Copy of order by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Civil Appeal No. 288/2021	1
2	02.02.2016	Copy of order by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Civil Appeal No. 288/2021	14

Dated at Chennai this the 7th day of February 2026



Sai Srujan Tayi
Counsel for MoEF& CC/1st Respondent
Contact No: 98414 41438
Mail ID: sai@girisai.com

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

CIVIL APPEAL NO. 288 OF 2021

Arnav Sinha

Appellant(s)

Versus

The State of West Bengal & Ors.

Respondent(s)

ORDER

1. This appeal is against the order of the National Green Tribunal seeking urgent and compelling remedial measures for protecting various species of sea turtles which are endangered. The learned *amici curiae* Ms. Liz Mathew and Ms. Uttara Babbar, while bringing to our notice the existing legal regime for protection of sea turtles in India submit that due to ineffective measures, the purpose and object of the laws and regulations is not realised. It is in this context that we have given certain directions.

2. Sea turtles play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the food web in the marine ecosystem. India has an extensive coastline of approximately 8,000 km, encompassing the mainland coast and the offshore islands of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep. Five species of sea turtles are found in Indian coastal waters, specifically in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.¹ These include: Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*, Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta*

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Date: 2023.08.24
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¹ WWF-India, *Marine Turtles along the Indian Coast – Distribution, Status, Threats and Management* (Annie Kurian ed, 2013).

caretta).

3. Every year, thousands of dead turtles are reported to have washed ashore, particularly along the coasts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. However, this is a small portion, as compared to the actual number of deaths which are reportedly much higher.² There is overwhelming evidence that the primary cause of adult turtle mortalities includes incidental capture in fishing gear, trawl nets, gill nets and ray nets.³

4. **The existing legal regime for the Protection of Sea Turtle's:**

Sea turtles in India receive the highest level of legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notifications of 2011 and 2019, which classify turtle nesting grounds as ecologically sensitive areas (CRZ 1(a)). It is important to note that under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, while Union has control over fishing beyond territorial waters (Entry 57, List I), States regulate fisheries within their jurisdiction (Entry 21, List II). Further, under the concurrent list both the Centre and States can legislate on wildlife protection (Entry 17A, List III). Marine Fishing Regulation Acts provide for the regulation of fishing vessels along the coastline of the State. The National Marine Turtle Action Plan (2021-2026) provides a structured framework for conservation,

² S V Krishna Chaitanya, 'Experts Are Alarmed as 350 Turtles Wash Ashore Dead in Chennai till January 15'

The New Indian Express (16 January 2025) <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2025/Jan/16/experts-are-alarmed-as-350-turtles-wash-ashore-dead-in-chennai-in-2025> accessed [22 March 2025].

³ M Rajagopalan, K Vijayakumaran and K Vivekanandan, 'Chapter 18: Fishery-Related Mortality of Sea Turtles in India: An Overview' in Kartik Shanker and BC Choudhury (eds), *Marine Turtles of the Indian Subcontinent* (Universities Press 2006).

identification of state-wise critical marine turtle habitats and addresses both onshore and offshore threats. The National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-2031 (NWAP) serves as the blue print for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitats in India. Recognizing the degradation caused by destructive fishing practices such as dragnet fishing, the NWAP aligns with India's commitment under the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) by mandating the conservation of at least 10% of coastal and marine areas through Marine Sanctuaries and National Parks. To achieve this goal, 106 coastal marine sites have been identified by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and prioritized as Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs), of which 44 are along the East Coast. Significantly, the NWAP has set a goal for implementing marine habitat restoration plans for mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds including turtle nesting beaches. However, despite its comprehensive approach, the plan suffers due to gaps in implementation and a lack of systematic reporting from the coastal States and UTs, hindering effective conservation efforts.

5. In an application⁴ before the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court of India to address the mortality of sea turtles in Odisha, the CEC examined the matter, undertook a site visit in March 2003, engaged with state officials, the Coast Guard, fishing communities, trawler owners, researchers, and conservationists and issued interim directives on 07.03.2003 mandating several protective measures. These included establishing permanent Forest Department camps at Devi river and Rushikulaya, acquiring

4 Application No. 46 dated 19.12.2002 before Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

patrol boats with police protection, and strengthening enforcement infrastructure. The Coast Guard was directed to deploy patrols and set up two shallow -water boat stations between Paradeep and Rushikulaya. The Fisheries Department was instructed to suspend licenses of boats not using Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) and take action against mechanized gill net boats lacking valid documents. A three-month ban on gill net boats within five kilometers of the shore was imposed, and wireless communication between the Coast Guard and Forest Department was to be enhanced. Additionally, extra volunteers were to be appointed for egg protection, and the Chief Wildlife Warden was advised to provide adequate facilities for patrolling staff.

6. As a follow up, further recommendations were made on 06.04.2024 with reference to; a) Restrictions on trawlers and monitoring of their activities; b) Restrictions in Gahirmatha Sanctuary; c) Traditional fishermen; d) Acquaculture activities; e) Infrastructure and personnel; f) Coast Guard/DRDO; g) Restrictions on lighting in turtle nesting areas; h) Threats; i) Removal of casuarina plantations.

7. While extending the fishing ban within a 20-kilometer radius of Gahirmatha, Devi river mouth, and Rushikulya, it was mandated that all fishing vessels display registration numbers, licenses, and names for aerial and sea-based inspections. Trawlers were required to carry laminated waterproof charts detailing permitted net types and lengths, certified by the captain and fisheries officer. Forest and Fisheries Department were directed to ensure

surprise inspection of boats on land prior to heading out to sea. Non-compliance with TED regulations would result in license cancellations, vessel impoundment, and fines, with repeat offenders facing stricter penalties.

8. While the above referred laws formulated under the Central and State statutes, Regulations, Action Plans, recommendations of the empowered committee, followed by directions of the Court are in place, problem persists because of the reason that there is no effective and efficient follow up of the regulatory measures. The real problem lies in diffusion of responsibility. Who are the duty bearers? What are their obligations? How can they be made accountable? What is the effective remedy? These are the relevant questions for effective and efficient implementation of any project.

9. On the basis of the reports submitted by the learned *amici*, by our order dated 06.08.2025, we directed the Union of India to file an affidavit indicating the office or the department responsible for planning, conservation and protecting the sea turtles. Pursuant to our directions, the Joint Director (Wildlife) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India filed the affidavit giving necessary details. In paragraph 7 and 8 of the affidavit it is stated as under:-

“ 7. It is most respectfully submitted that for better coordination for protection and conservation of sea turtles, a coordination committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Wild Life Warden may be constituted, which can act as a state-level institutional mechanism to oversee turtle conservation and monitor the adoption and implementation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) across the national fishing ecosystem. The protection and conservation of sea turtles is the responsibility of the State Government.

8. Without prejudice to the above, and in compliance with this Hon'ble Court's order dated 06.08.2025, it is further submitted that the Director, Wildlife Preservation, MoEF&CC, is designated as the nodal officer at

the national level to provide policy guidance, planning support, and coordination with States and Union Territories. The role of the Union of India is to assist, guide, and support the States, however, on-ground conservation, enforcement, and long-term protection of sea turtles primarily rests with the concerned States and Union Territories.”

10. Following the above referred statement, Coastal States and the Union Territories expressed their willingness to abide by the suggestion. The proposal relates to constitution of National Nodal Officer at the Centre, to provide policy guidelines, planning, support and co-ordination and constitution of State and Union Territories Co-ordination Committees at the State Level.

11. Assisting us, Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, Ld. ASG submitted that the contents of the affidavit can translate into necessary directions.

12. As an interim measure, till the necessary rules and regulations are formulated and issued, the following shall be enforceable directions for implementing the Turtle Conservation Measures. In view of the above, we direct as under: -

I. National Nodal Officer to provide policy guidance, planning support and coordination: Director, Wildlife Preservation, MoEF&CC as the National Nodal Officer. The National Nodal Officer shall be made responsible for coordinating with all States/UTs, providing technical guidance, and placing consolidated reports of action taken by the States/UTs before this Hon'ble Court.

II. Constitution of State & UT Coordination Committees:

(1) States and UTs shall expeditiously constitute their respective State/UT Coordination Committees within a period of six weeks.

(2) Each Coordination Committee shall be headed by the Chief Wildlife Warden and will function as a State-level institutional mechanism for sea turtle conservation. Coordination Committee shall include the following representatives from key stakeholders to ensure comprehensive monitoring and enforcement:

- a) One Senior Officer from the Fisheries Department
- b) One Senior Officer from the Forest Department
- c) One Senior Officer from the Coastal Security Group
- d) One Senior Officer from the Coast Guard
- e) One representative from the Trawl Fishers Welfare Association
- f) Two representatives from artisanal/traditional fishing communities
- g) Two members from NGOs with at least five years of active work in turtle conservation
- h) One expert or wildlife conservationist with experience in marine conservation
- i) A Fisheries Scientist of appropriate expertise from the National Fisheries Research Institutions

III. Formulation & Implementation of State-specific Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

(1) After the constitution and convening of the State and UT Coordination Committees, the Committees will immediately undertake the following:

- a) Formulate and implement a State-specific Standard Operating Procedure ("SOP") for sea turtle conservation, addressing the principal causes of turtle mortality, including, (i) use of trawlers and trawl nets, (ii) entanglement in non-trawl nets such as gill nets and nets set for ray fish or other banned nets, (iii) poaching of eggs, (iv) death of hatchlings along the shore, and (v) loss of nesting grounds.
- b) Implement all directions specifically sought in the Amicus Report as well as the SOP formulated by the Committee as described above in paragraph 6(a).
- c) Submit bi-annual reports to the Nodal Officer regarding the effective implementation of the SOPs to enhance transparency and accountability.
- d) Maintain a minimum uniform standard of care and protection for sea turtles across the States and UTs, irrespective of other governmental or executive schemes/initiatives/ plans that may be in place.
- e) Record, analyse and compile all relevant data, statistics and field reports for use at both Central and State levels to

formulate better policies, regulations and conservation strategies over time.

IV. Monitoring, Reporting and Action Taken Framework

(1) The Coordination Committees shall meet regularly and shall undertake periodic monitoring of conservation measures. The Coordination Committees of each State /UT shall submit a detailed Action Taken Report ("ATR") to the National Nodal Officer within 3 months from the date of constitution of the Coordination Committee, and every 6 months thereafter.

(2) The ATRs shall include information on:

- a) implementation of the SOP;
- b) enforcement measures;
- c) monitoring of fishing practices;
- d) implementation and installation of TEDs where mandatory;
- e) data on nesting, mortality and beach conditions; and
- f) any emergent issues requiring central guidance.

13. On receipt of action taken reports from the States and Union Territories, the National Nodal Officer shall submit its report to this Court by 30th of April and 31st of October every year till 2027. We are of the opinion that after the process is institutionalised, it may not be necessary for this Court to monitor the regulation and implementation any further. Thereafter, it will be the responsibility of the authorities to take such measures as may be necessary.

14. As regards an important measure concerning procurement and installation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), we are informed that Department of Fisheries, Government of India received a proposal from the

Coastal States seeking financial support from the PMMSY⁵. We are also informed that the Central Apex Committee of the PMMSY examined the proposals in its 16th meeting dated 27.01.2025 and approved inclusion of TEDs as a new line item under the centrally sponsored component of the scheme. Further, the PMMSY guidelines on TEDs (Guidelines) were issued by the Department of Fisheries setting out the proposal for implementing the financial mechanism for installation of TEDs. The guidelines launched by the Union Minister of Fisheries on 28.04.2025 circulated to all Coastal States and UTs on 01.05.2025.

15. We are also informed that in furtherance of the financial support for providing TEDs, Government of India has issued a Notification dated 05.10.2025 approving the budgetary allocation of an amount of Rs. 57,72,63,000/- with the share of the Central Government being Rs. 34,64,00,000/-, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Notification. In view of the above, we direct the State and Union Territories to; (i) ensure timely and effective implementation, installation, and operationalisation of minimum 50% of TEDs within the prescribed period of 12 months as contemplated under the aforesaid Notification dated 05.10.2025, and (ii) endeavour to ensure that 100% implementation, installation, and operationalisation of TEDs is achieved within a further period of 12 months thereafter.

5 Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana.

16. The Director, Wildlife Preservation, MoEF&CC, being the National Nodal Officer shall file an affidavit indicating compliance of the directions in this order. List the matter on 02.02.2026.

.....J.
[PAMIDIGHANTAM SRI NARASIMHA]

.....J.
[ATUL S. CHANDURKAR]

NEW DELHI,
DECEMBER 17, 2025.

ITEM NO.15

COURT NO.6

SECTION XVII

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Civil Appeal No(s). 288/2021

ARNAV SINHA

Appellant(s)

VERSUS

THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL & ORS.

Respondent(s)

IA No. 13982/2021 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED
JUDGMENT, IA No. 13973/2021 - GRANT OF INTERIM RELIEF
IA No. 13972/2021 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS/
FACTS/ANNEXURES

Date : 17-12-2025 This matter was called on for hearing today.

CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PAMIDIGHANTAM SRI NARASIMHA
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ATUL S. CHANDURKAR

Amicus Curiae

Ms. Liz Mathew, Sr. Adv.
Ms. Uttara Babbar, Sr. Adv.
Assisted by :-
Ms. Roopali Lakhotia, AOR
Ms. Bagavathy Vennimalai, Adv.
Ms. Rayana Mukherjee, Adv.
Mr. Ayush Shah, Adv.
Mr. Adithya S Nair, Adv.

For Appellant(s) : Mr. Jai Anant Dehadrai, Adv.
Ms. Stuti Priyadarshini, Adv.
Mr. Pulkit Agarwal, AOR

For Respondent(s) : Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, A.S.G.
Ms. Shivika Mehra, Adv.
Mr. Gaurang Bhushan, Adv.
Mr. Annirudh Sharma-ii, Adv.
Mr. Anirudh Bhatt, Adv.
Ms. Indira Bhakar, Adv.
Mr. Mukesh Kumar Verma, Adv.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup, Adv.
Mr. Rajesh Singh Chauhan, Adv.
Mr. Ishaan Sharma, Adv.
Ms. Priyadarshini Priya, Adv.
Mrs. Mrinal Mazumdar, Adv.
Mr. N Visakamurthy, aor, Adv.
Mr. Santosh Ramdurg, Adv.
Mr. Shreekant Neelappa Terdal, AOR

Ms. Madhumita Bhattacharjee, AOR

Ms. Debarati Sadhu, Adv.
Mr. Dhruv Bhalla, Adv.
Mr. B Jagat Nayan, Adv.

Mr. Som Raj Choudhury, AOR

Mr. Sahil Bhalaik, AOR
Mr. Tushar Giri, Adv.
Mr. Siddharth Anil Khanna, Adv.
Mr. Ritik Arora, Adv.
Mr. Shivam Mishra, Adv.
Mr. Mihir Joshi, Adv.
Ms. Pragati Kumari, Adv.
Mr. Murshlin Ansari, Adv.

Ms. G Indira, AOR
Mr. P Gandepan, Adv.
Ms. Anjali Singh, Adv.
Ms. Raniba Pangnila, Adv.
Mr. Anurag Kashyap, Adv.

Mr. Harshad V. Hameed, AOR
Mr. Dileep Poolakkot, Adv.
Mrs. Ashly Harshad, Adv.
Mr. Mahabir Singh, Adv.
Mr. Anshul Saharan, Adv.

Mr. Aman Panwar, A.A.G.
Ms. Patil Rekha Chandra Gouda, AOR
Dr. Ram Sankar, Adv.
Mr. Jadhav Vishal, Adv.
Mr. Abhinav Kumar, Adv.

Mrs. Shirin Khajuria, Sr. Adv.
Ms. Bhavana Duhoon, AOR
Ms. Swati Tiwari, Adv.
Mr. Anshul Syal, Adv.

Dr. Ravindra Chingale, Adv.
Mr. Siddharth Dharmadhikari, Adv.
Mr. Aaditya Aniruddha Pande, AOR
Mr. Shrirang B. Varma, Adv.

Ms. Deepanwita Priyanka, AOR
Mr. Satyalipsu Ray, Adv.
Mr. Deepak Singh, Adv.
Ms. Priyal Sheth, Adv.

Ms. Archana Pathak Dave, A.S.G.
Mr. Gurmeet Singh Makker, AOR
Mr. Chitvan Singhal, Adv.
Ms. Shagun Thakur, Adv.

Mr. Udit Dedhiya, Adv.
Mr. Aditya Dixit, Adv.
Mr. Rohan Gupta, Adv.

Mr. Aravindh S., AOR
Mr. Aman Gautam, Adv.
Ms. Anika Bansal, Adv.

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

The matter is directed to be listed on 02.02.2026 by way of signed order. The operative portion of the order reads as thus :-

"15. We are also informed that in furtherance of the financial support for providing TEDs, Government of India has issued a Notification dated 05.10.2025 approving the budgetary allocation of an amount of Rs. 57,72,63,000/- with the share of the Central Government being Rs. 34,64,00,000/-, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Notification. In view of the above, we direct the State and Union Territories to; (i) ensure timely and effective implementation, installation, and operationalisation of minimum 50% of TEDs within the prescribed period of 12 months as contemplated under the aforesaid Notification dated 05.10.2025, and (ii) endeavour to ensure that 100% implementation, installation, and operationalisation of TEDs is achieved within a further period of 12 months thereafter.

16. The Director, Wildlife Preservation, MoEF&CC, being the National Nodal Officer shall file an affidavit indicating compliance of the directions in this order. List the matter on 02.02.2026."

(JAYANT KUMAR ARORA)
ASTT. REGISTRAR-cum-PS

(NIDHI WASON)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

(Signed order is placed on the file)

ITEM NO.40

COURT NO.6

SECTION XVII

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
R E C O R D O F P R O C E E D I N G S

Civil Appeal No(s). 288/2021

ARNAV SINHA

Appellant(s)

VERSUS

THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL & ORS.

Respondent(s)

Ms. Liz Mathew and Ms. Uttara Babbar, Sr. Advocates [Amicus Curie]
IA No. 13982/2021 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED
JUDGMENT
IA No. 13973/2021 - GRANT OF INTERIM RELIEF
IA No. 13972/2021 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL
DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

Date : 02-02-2026 This matter was called on for hearing today.

CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PAMIDIGHANTAM SRI NARASIMHA
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ALOK ARADHE

For Appellant(s) : Mr. Jai Anant Dehadrai, AOR

For Respondent(s) : Ms. Madhumita Bhattacharjee, AOR
Mr. Dhruv Bhalla, Adv.
Ms. Debarati Sadhu, Adv.
Mr. B Jagat Nayan, Adv.

Mr. Som Raj Choudhury, AOR

Mr. Sahil Bhalaik, AOR
Mr. Tushar Giri, Adv.
Mr. Siddharth Anil Khanna, Adv.
Mr. Ritik Arora, Adv.
Mr. Shivam Mishra, Adv.
Mr. Mihir Joshi, Adv.

Mr. Arijit Pasayat, Sr. Adv.
Ms. G. Indira, AOR
Mr. P Gandepan, Adv.
Mr. Anurag Kashyap, Adv.
Ms. Anjali Singh, Adv.
Ms. Raniba Pangnila, Adv.

Ms. Indira Bhakar, Adv.
Mr. Mukesh Kumar Verma, Adv.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup, Adv.

Ms. Priyadarshini Priya, Adv.
 Mrs. Mrinal Mazumdar, Adv.
 Mr. Santosh Ramdurg, Adv.
 Mr. Yogesh Vats, Adv.
 Mr. Shreekant Neelappa Terdal, AOR
 Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, A.S.G.
 Ms. Shivika Mehra, Adv.
 Mr. Gaurang Bhushan, Adv.
 Mr. Annirudh Sharma-ii, Adv.
 Mr. Anirudh Bhatt, Adv.
 Mr. Ishaan Sharma, Adv.
 Mr. N Visakamurthy, aor, Adv.

Mr. Harshad V. Hameed, AOR
 Mr. Dileep Poolakkot, Adv.
 Mrs. Ashly Harshad, Adv.
 Mr. Mahabir Singh, Adv.
 Dr. Arunender Thakur, Adv.
 Mr. Anshul Saharan, Adv.

Mr. Aman Panwar, A.A.G.
 Ms. Patil Rekha Chandra Gouda, AOR
 Mr. Jadhav Vishal, Adv.
 Mr. Abhinav Kumar, Adv.
 Mr. Manav Kaushik, Adv.

Mrs. Shirin Khajuria, Sr. Adv.
 Ms. Bhavana Duhoon, AOR
 Ms. Swati Tiwari, Adv.
 Mr. Anshul Syal, Adv.

Dr. Ravindra Chingale, Adv.
 Mr. Siddharth Dharmadhikari, Adv.
 Mr. Aaditya Aniruddha Pande, AOR
 Mr. Shrirang B. Varma, Adv.

Ms. Deepanwita Priyanka, AOR
 Ms. Priyal Sheth, Adv.

Ms. Archana Pathak Dave, A.S.G.
 Mr. Gurmeet Singh Makker, AOR
 Mr. Chitvan Singhal, Adv.
 Ms. Shagun Thakur, Adv.
 Mr. Udit Dedhiya, Adv.
 Mr. Aditya Dixit, Adv.
 Mr. Rohan Gupta, Adv.

Mr. Aravindh S., AOR
 Ms. Jyotika Sharma, Adv.
 Ms. Ekta Moyal, Adv.

Ms. Liz Mathew, Sr. Adv.

Ms. Uttara Babbar, Sr. Adv.
Ms. Roopali Lakhotia, AOR
Ms. Bagavathy Vennimalai, Adv.
Ms. Rayana Mukherjee, Adv.
Mr. Ayush Shah, Adv.
Mr. Adithya S Nair, Adv.

Mr. Jai Anant Dehadrai, AOR
Ms. Srutee Priyadharshini, Adv.
Ms. Bhavya Jain, Adv.
Mr. Harshat Singh, Adv.

Mr. Indira Bhakar, Adv.
Mr. Vineet Singh, Adv.
Mr. S.N. Terdal, AOR

Ms. Sanjana Saddy, AOR
Mr. Shailja Singh, Adv.
Ms. Shivani Mehtra, Adv.
Ms. Sanjana Saddy, Adv.

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

At the request of Ms. Archana Pathak Dave, learned Additional Solicitor General, the matter stands adjourned to enable her to file status report.

List after four weeks.

(KAPIL TANDON)
COURT MASTER (SH)

(NIDHI WASON)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR